

**UNITED NATIONS EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON
POPULATION, FOOD SECURITY, NUTRITION AND
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Population Division

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

United Nations Secretariat

New York

16-17 September 2019

CONCEPT NOTE**Introduction**

The question of how to feed a growing global population has been central to discussions around population and development for decades. While the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development highlighted the problem of undernutrition, today's discussion of malnutrition is broader and includes stunting, wasting, overweight and obesity, as well as micronutrient deficiencies. Moreover, there is an increasing recognition of the challenges to food security posed by factors such as climate change, conflict and economic downturns.

Recognizing the importance and timeliness of these topics, the United Nations Commission on Population and Development decided in 2018 that the thematic focus of its fifty-third session in 2020 would be "Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development". In preparation for the upcoming session, the Population Division of UN DESA will convene an expert group meeting on this topic, to be held in New York from 16 to 17 September 2019.

Global trends in food security and nutrition

According to the 2019 edition of *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, 820 million people are currently suffering from hunger, while an additional 1.3 billion are facing a moderate degree of food insecurity. An estimated one in seven babies globally are born with low birthweight. At the same time, an estimated 830 million people around the world are obese.

Agricultural production more than tripled between 1960 and 2015, in part to productivity-enhancing Green Revolution technologies, and expansion in the use of land, water and other natural resources. Food and agricultural systems are affected by population and income growth trends that may jeopardise their future sustainability. The successful expansion of food production has heightened concerns around environmental sustainability, as the food system is a major contributor to, for example, release of greenhouse gases, land degradation, and destruction of habitats. Meanwhile, the shift to more capital-intensive forms of agriculture is driving a transformation of rural economies and societies, contributing to the growth of cities and intensifying pressures for migration both within and between countries.

Relevance for discussions of global development at the United Nations

The mandate of the Commission on Population and Development, as reaffirmed in 2016, is to monitor, review and assess the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/RES/2016/25, OP2). Within that mandate, the Commission contributes also to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into account the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and their interlinkages (E/RES/2016/25, OP4).

Food security and nutrition figure prominently in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2015 resolution by the General Assembly envisions “a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, ... where food is sufficient, safe, affordable and nutritious” (para. 7). In the same document, Member States of the United Nations pledged “to end hunger and to achieve food security as a matter of priority and to end all forms of malnutrition.” This pledge was elaborated in Goal 2, containing 8 targets related to hunger, malnutrition, agricultural productivity, sustainable food production systems, genetic diversity, rural investment, trade and food commodity markets.

Work by the United Nations to improve nutrition is guided by the outcome of the Second International Conference on Nutrition, held in Rome in 2014, and the UN Decade on Nutrition. The Committee on World Food Security is a UN body that brings together stakeholders to ensure food security and nutrition for all.

Objectives of the meeting

The purpose of the expert group meeting is to examine new evidence and analysis regarding relationships between population change, food security, nutrition and sustainable development. Topics to be covered are expected to include:

- Concepts and measures of food security and nutrition;
- Linkages to population megatrends and components of change;
- Connections of food security to growth, consumption and sustainability;
- Land degradation, water scarcity and biosphere impacts (biodiversity, GHG emissions, climate change);
- Projected trends of population and food, alternative scenarios;
- Transformation of rural economies and employment as a driver of population movements, including urbanization, internal and international migration;
- Synergies between population movements and rural development, including migrant remittances and diaspora investments;
- Urban food security and urban-rural linkages in food systems;
- Prevalence of nutritional deficiencies (caloric and/or micronutrient);
- Consequences of hunger and undernutrition for mortality and health, including reproductive health, with a focus on mothers, infants, children, adolescents and older persons;
- Extent of obesity, including childhood obesity, and consequences for mortality and health, both now and in the future (as current younger generations grow older);
- Diets, nutritional habits and burden of disease.

Background notes

Invited speakers are requested to provide brief background notes of approximately five pages for distribution to other participants. Each note should address a specific agenda item and include a summary of the expert’s own research and evidence from other sources, with reference to the ICPD Programme of Action, the 2030 Agenda or other relevant intergovernmental agreements.

Outcome of the meeting

The Population Division will prepare a report to summarize the discussions and key conclusions of the meeting. With the permission of participants, background notes and presentations will be posted on the website of the Commission on Population and Development, hosted by the Population Division.

The expert meeting is expected to provide substantive inputs for the preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General on the special theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission on Population and Development. In particular, the meeting will result in draft recommendations on ways in which the Commission can contribute to the international dialogue on the issues.